



# Evergreen

It might not be so easy being green but it's a snap compared to creating a sequel to the phenomenally successful *Shrek*, explains producer David Lipman.

Interview by Simon Wells

**T**his time around we were looking for a challenge for *Shrek*'s character in terms of growth," states associate producer David Lipman in a deadly earnest manner, when asked why the writers eventually agreed on a *Meet the Parents*, *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner* plotline for *Shrek 2*. "In the first one Shrek sort of learns to love himself. In this movie, it's all about him learning to love somebody else... and all the challenges that entails."

Lipman's tone immediately suggests that, whilst the finished result might be anything but, the business of ensuring the safety of a mega-million dollar franchise certainly is a serious business indeed. From the outset, a follow-up to the hugely successful *Shrek* might seem like a license to print money, but one only has to squeue "*Babe 2*" to find studio execs ducking for cover.

Hindsight, of course, has shown the filmmakers needn't have worried too much. Financially eclipsing the original *Shrek*, the sequel currently reigns as the year's undisputed box office champ.

While Joe Public can generally understand the need for writers, directors, etc, the role of an associate producer remains something of an enigma for those outside the film industry. "Well, it's all about keeping morale up," explains Lipman on his day to day duties. "And keeping a unified vision. Trying to get all these people on track so we're all making the same movie and keeping the tone right. You're doing this whilst you're developing and writing software; and while the story's changing and evolving."

Lipman joined Dreamworks Animation in 1997 after running an animation company for seven years. There



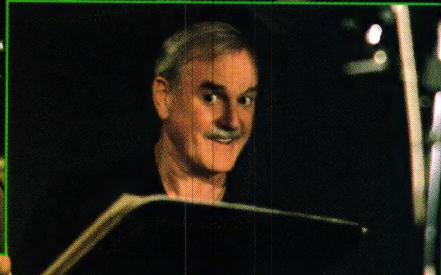
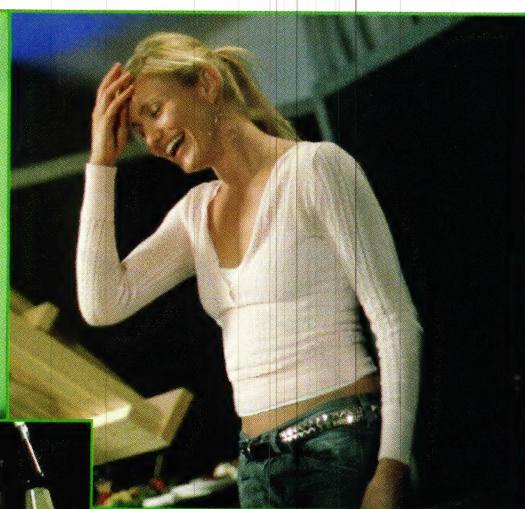
he provided digital work for, amongst others, *The Simpsons* and *Beavis and Butthead*. When he became co-head of production at DreamWorks burgeoning animation division, Lipman took over producing chores on the original *Shrek*. Work on the sequel followed almost immediately. After two and a half years of working six to seven day weeks, the weary producer looks forward to a well earned vacation.

"It was tough," he sighs. "We had a very short schedule and very long hours. But you sort of have to put it behind you and just get on with the work. There's a crew of over 400 people making one of these things. And over a two and a half year period, that's a long haul."

While it's not uncommon for animated features to bear two directors, *Shrek 2* required no less than three. "Making a film like this is a big challenge," Lipman explains. "The directors all serve different functions. Andrew Adams – who worked on the original movie – served more as a director in terms of dealing with story issues and directing the voice talent; whereas Kelly and Conrad dealt more with directing the animation on a day to day basis. Conrad also provided the voice of the Gingerbread Man." So, does he speak in that high pitched voice in real life? "Well if you pay him he will" replies Lipman dryly.

*Shrek 2*'s homages, parodies and jabs come fast and furious, making multiple viewings almost mandatory for even the sharpest-eyed fan. "When you're sitting around for two and a half years, one of the biggest challenges is that when you're living with a joke for so long, it doesn't seem funny anymore," reveals Lipman. "We wanted to keep entertaining ourselves, keep the jokes fresh. It's not until you test the movie that you discover, 'whew, it still works'. But it explains why you get so many layers happening. Because you're living with it for so long, it's like, well, what if we added this in the background just to keep it alive for ourselves? Our writing process starts from a treatment and then we start to storyboard... start developing the script. Then there's a lot of back and forth, getting the story to work. The beauty of this type of writing process is that it allows all that layering."

*Shrek 2* may boast a heftier gag count than most family fare but the makers adhere steadfastly to the



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#### Catch that flick? Movie homages galore lurk in *Shrek 2*



Puss in Boots; "They'll never make me cry" was a Jane Fonda line in *Cat Ballou*



The Giant Gingerbread Man's last words "Be Good" last heard when E.T. farewelled Drew Barrymore



A poster of Spinal Tap in front of Stonehenge



A barnstorming Gingerbread Man follows in the footsteps of the Stay-Puft Marshmallow Man from *Ghostbusters*

current trend of recent family friendly flicks by ensuring the soundtrack is permanently abuzz with eighties tunes designed to keep parent's toes tapping. And maybe even sell some soundtracks? "Y'know, that wasn't a conscious thing," swears Lipman. "It just happened. We were looking for tunes that made sense in terms of the storytelling and it just happened that way. I think it's because all of us grew up with that stuff is why it's so familiar."

What is unusual is that squeezed in between the bubblegum version of the Buzzcocks "Ever Fallen in Love" and the ever cheesy "Holding Out For a Hero" can be found wailings from artists like Nick Cave and Tom Waits, who (at least once upon a time, anyway) would probably have been considered too edgy for a family film. "Oh sure..." agrees Lipman, "...but it works! Second time around, everyone wanted to be involved. Tom Waits loved the first movie and couldn't wait to get involved. We did a re-recording of "Changes" with Butterfly... and Bowie wanted to sing back-up vocals! That was like

'Oh my god!'

In another well worn Hollywood tradition, the film's stuffier roles have been filled with Brits, including Jennifer Saunders, Julie Andrews, Rupert Everett, and John Cleese. "Well that was just sort of a subconscious thing" explains Lipman. "Everybody in *Far Far Away* is sort of stuck up and a little bit full of themselves, so we decided to make it a British cast. But probably more than anything, it was done just to differentiate them from the American cast. I got to call Jennifer Saunders and pitch her the project. She said if I don't do it, my kids will kill me. We had to convince her to sing, though."

With the sequel a bona fide smash, another installment doesn't seem so much a case of will there, but how soon? "*Shrek 3* is in active development" admits Lipman cautiously, "but will only go forward if they get a story that makes sense and if the story is worth telling... and holds true to the characters."

**Shrek 2 is available from Nov 3**





## Mike Myers

Donkey gets very, very jealous of Puss in Boots and you know, all I can say is who's the green one, now? I think my favourite thing in the entire movie is Puss in Boots. I'm a huge fan of Antonio Banderas and in my next life, I will look like him and sound like him. He is funny and charming and that little cat is so sweet, I wanna take that cat home and have him be my pet."



## Cameron Diaz

It's so gratifying every time I walk down the street and a parent or a kid comes up, the parents are always saying, 'you know who that is - that's Princess Fiona' and the kids always say, 'no it's not.' And I just like seeing that genuine reaction in kids, and knowing that on the other hand they're in some way protecting Fiona."

## Antonio Banderas

Puss in Boots, El Gato Con Botas, in Spanish, it's a character that I know since I am probably three. But I never knew that I was going to play him someday in my life. It's a character with a tremendous sense of honour. He's just got a very strong personality, and in a body that doesn't correspond to that. And he's very very sweet, very little, you just want to cuddle him.

I have the opportunity in this movie of taking a little laugh from Zorro. Zorro's character is serious, arrogant, brilliant, very sly, and in this character, what I try to do is just laugh at myself a little bit."

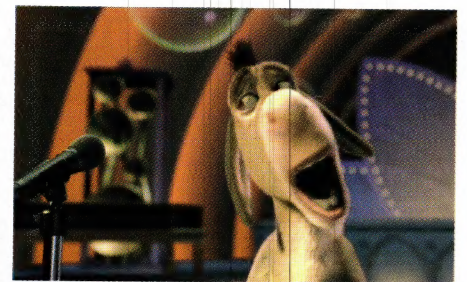
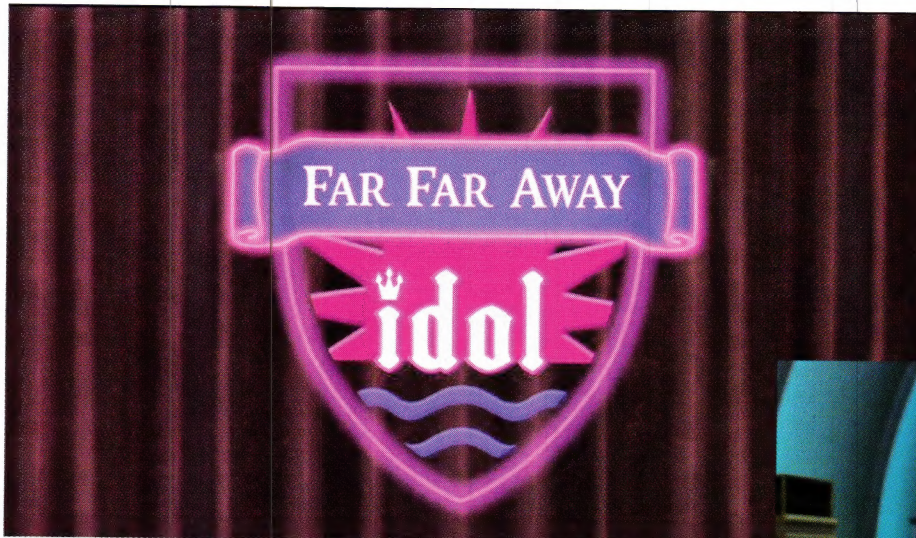




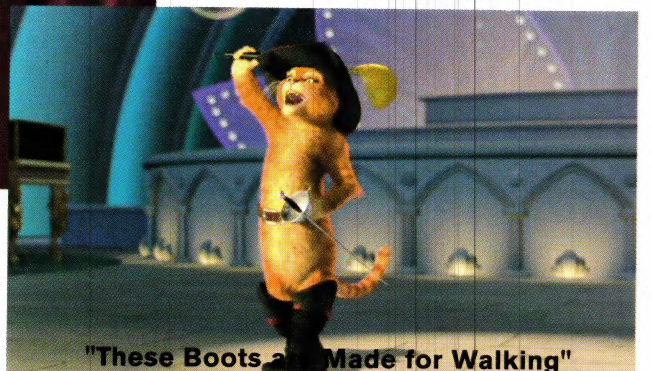


### Eddie Murphy

Unbeknownst to Donkey, he's become the third wheel. He hasn't realised he is the third wheel. He's thinking, this is all good. We are here and it's all worked out and we are all together. He didn't realise he is the third wheel, because he is a jackass. Donkey is an optimist. He is always, looking at the bright side of everything, quick to laugh and happy go lucky."



"Disco Inferno"



"These Boots are Made for Walking"



"Girl's Just Wanna Have Fun"

### You get to choose

Destined to be one of the more popular extras on the *Shrek 2* DVD is this spot-on spoof of the Reality TV talent quest in which the inhabitants of Far Far Away go before the judging panel of Simon Cowell (*American Idol* judge, digitally incarnated here), Shrek and Princess Fiona to discover who's not only the fairest in the land but can also carry a tune.

Contestants include Donkey, the Ugly Stepsister, Puss in Boots, the Three Blind Mice and many more, belting out an energetic and eclectic mix of covers as you've never heard them before.

When each contestant has impressed or distressed, at the end of the segment viewers can register their vote onscreen for an instant winner, or online with millions of other Shrek fans.

But make no mistake, like the real-life *Idol* this is majorly competitive with the talent er, variable, and the judges' decisions frequently harsh but true.

Printable activities are also available to further enhance the *Idol* experience, including score cards, posters, signed glossy photos and contestant bios.